



Organisational Development and People Strategy (ODPS) 2024 – 2027

The Cairngorms National Park Authority's vision is:

“An outstanding National Park, enjoyed and valued by everyone, where nature and people thrive together”.

Our mission is to lead the way in delivering for the Cairngorms National Park Authority by:

- Bringing people together towards a common purpose
- Enhancing the Cairngorms National Park for everyone
- Inspiring new generations to be national park champions

Introduction

1. Organisational development refers to the development of the people and infrastructure of the organisation within a certain environment (eg one led by economic circumstances, societal and / or organisational expectations, and aspirations). Without its people, technologies and values, the organisation cannot exist. An organisational development strategy is a deliberate planned organisational wide programme of work to enhance organisational effectiveness and efficiency within the contextual and changing environment at play at a given point in time.
2. 2023 marked the 20th anniversary of the Cairngorms National Park Authority (Park Authority). So much has changed over the last 20 years, but the key “thread” that has remained constant over this time is the National Park aims and a vision to see people and nature thriving together. Within these aims and vision, the nature and climate crisis are at the core of our work at this current time, and the Park Authority is tasked with coordinating the management of the Cairngorms National Park, and developing and delivering a wellbeing economy that works for the people of the Cairngorms, whilst also restoring nature and delivering net zero. Our ambition is set across three themes – nature, people, and place, which are underpinned by our aim of being “the best small public sector public body in Scotland”.



3. This Organisational Development and People Strategy (ODPS) is designed to give our staff the framework and support to be able to deliver these ambitions successfully. It sets out our vision for our organisational performance and behaviour and outlines the overarching programme of work to deliver and embed the organisational changes to deliver that vision. This strategy facilitates a high-performance and people-focused culture where our staff are the cornerstone of our success, and thereby are efficient, healthy, diverse, have access to the most up to date technologies and practices, have opportunities for learning and development, and have a working environment that facilitates collaboration and innovation. This strategy will continue to nurture our positive working culture, aiming to make the Park Authority an employer of choice for our current and future colleagues.

Organisational context 2024

1. Since the last Organisational Development and People Strategy was implemented pre-Covid, there have been many changes within the organisation, all of which have influenced and shaped the areas that our ODPS needs to focus on. These changes include the following:
 - a) Our National Park Partnership Plan 2023 - 27 has been approved, and our bid for National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) funding for the five year delivery phase of the Cairngorms 2030 project was successful. This means a further increase in our scale of financial and staffing resources, and a significant increase in profile for the organisation, which brings with it increases in terms of delivery expectations and pressures associated with that.
 - b) There has been an increase in staff numbers not only to support Cairngorms 2030, but also in order to deliver the increased investment in peatland restoration and nature restoration funding, as well as the ongoing requirement for an active and engaged National Park employed ranger service. Although the organisation is now 20 years old, 50% of our staff have been with the organisation for less than two and a half years. So, our staff demographic represents an interesting mix of new knowledge, skills, ambition, expectations and ideas, which sits alongside established staff with years of experience and networks.
 - c) Following permanent changes to the working culture as a result of two years of lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic, we have implemented a Hybrid Working Policy, whereby the default position is that staff work 50% of their contracted hours from home and 50% from the office. Whilst this is a significant move from pre-Covid working where 90% of our staff were office based 100%



of their time, it is also a move from many other public sector organisations who still have the majority of staff home working for most of the time.

- d) Although the office space was vastly extended in the last six years, the office can no longer accommodate the full current and anticipated staff complement if we were all to be together in the office at the same time. This, together with the implementation of hybrid working, has facilitated the need for enhanced digital innovation and technology.
- e) There has been a phased reduction in the working week from 37.5 hours / week, to 36 hours / week from 1 April 2023, and 35 hours from 1 April 2024 implemented on the basis of efficiencies in operations and in deployment of staff time.
- f) We have in the last two years constituted both an engaged external Equality Advisory Panel and an active internal Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advocacy Group (Internal Equalities Group), through which we have achieved the LGBT Charter accreditation at foundations level; developed some key partnerships, eg with Black Professionals Scotland, and the Rainbow Enterprise Network; and implemented some bold and progressive policies, eg Neurodiversity Policy, Miscarriage Policy, Reasonable Adjustments Passport Policy, Gender Diversity Policy. Our workforce diversity has increased as a result of the work of these two groups and a supportive organisational policy environment, which is positive, but the numbers of minoritised staff are still small, reflecting the typical demographics of the public sector.
- g) There are pockets of technical specialists that have proved to be challenging from a recruitment perspective. Our rural location and in particular the more recent difficulty in securing long term housing in the area has also impacted on recruitment.
- h) The consultation and planning for a third national park as well as the programme for Public Sector Reform has the potential to impact on the operations of the Park Authority, and the way we work generally.

2. It is clear from all the above points that the ways in which we work have and are continuing to fundamentally change. The option to work from anywhere has been expedited, and this impacts on the approach we have to each other and to working together. There has been rapid transformation of digital systems, which presents many opportunities, but also challenges, and this strategy looks to address these and benefit where we can. This strategy also looks to review and enhance our capability in dealing with a growing skills shortage in some of the key areas of our work, together with a need for exceptional leadership and management skills, and a culture that embraces the diversity of our existing and future staff group.



Organisational Development and People Strategy – input / influence

1. In October 2023, we conducted the biennial Best Companies Staff Survey, and have been analysing and discussing the results, at an organisational level and also at team / directorate level. This has involved directorate meetings as well as drop-in sessions and discussions within established groups. Appendix 1 sets out the high level results, and Annex 2 sets out the context and interpretation of these results. The discussions about these results will continue for many months to come, as we drill deeper into the analysis and further focus on key areas, and thereby keep the engagement around the survey alive, fluid and evolving. The results have informed this strategy, and as the discussions continue and evolve, so too will the actions to deliver the key ODPS themes. Key messages that have emerged from the discussions to date are as follows:
 - a) Generally positive engagement (only one question scored below the neutral score of four), with six out of eight factors showing improvement since the 2021 survey.
 - b) The Park Authority achieved “one star” status, which is better than any of the last four surveys.
 - c) Improvement in the wellbeing factor, which is now viewed more positively than ever before, with the exception of perceptions around staff feeling exhausted when they finish work. To be explored – is this due to workload management, type or amount of work, diary management, the significant changes that are happening etc?
 - d) No movement in the leadership factor – issues around visibility / accessibility / approachability of management.
 - e) Need to consider retention and development, and how we can support development when there are limited opportunities for promotion.
 - f) Fair deal (which covers pay) down on previous survey.
 - g) Noted that staff at bands D and E are less engaged than all other levels, as are staff who have been with the organisation for five to 10 years.
2. We have also established an internal Culture and Values Focus Group, drawn from staff members across the organisation. The group is tasked with considering if the existing values are still relevant for our organisation, and reviewing them if necessary, and then establishing how the Park Authority aims to bring the agreed values to life internally in terms of what we need to do in order to ensure that our



staff group see the Park Authority as living up to its values and embedding the values in our day-to-day operations. The work of this group has informed this strategy and will continue to inform the evolving programme of actions.

3. We had an all-staff away day in October 2022 where staff had the opportunity to give their views on organisation development areas and actions that they felt were required, and another staff away day in October 2023 which explored our current values, with staff members putting forward their thoughts on the organisational values and the associated behaviours that they would like to see embedded as part of their organisation. This staff feedback has contributed to this strategy.

Organisational Development and People Strategy – vision and key themes

1. Taking into account the many changes in the way we work that have evolved over the last few years, together with our current strategic plans and strategies; as well as staff feedback through the survey, the various groups and facilitated events, this Organisational Development and People Strategy identifies seven key themes, set out below, all of which are underpinned by the following overarching vision / aspiration:

“The Cairngorms National Park Authority will be an organisation that involves all our staff in developing our goals, targets, processes, and strategies; celebrates what we do well, both at an organisational and individual level; inspires and enables outstanding performance; and supports our staff to achieve excellence in their work, their behaviour, and their relationships with each other. This will help us to achieve our ambition to be the best small public sector organisation in Scotland”.

Key themes:

2. Set out below are the key themes, and their associated outcomes:
 - i. Our infrastructure will support our staff to work comfortably, safely, and efficiently in an ever-changing working environment, supporting our aspirations for net zero, and making the best use of the technology available to us (this includes our facilities and IT services). The outcomes of this theme will be:
 - a. Ensure we have the infrastructure to support active travel for staff.



- b. Ensure we maximize the use of our desk spaces to be able to facilitate as many staff and partners using the building on a daily basis.
 - c. Ballater office to be welcoming and attractive.
 - d. The extension office is not as noisy as it is currently.
 - e. The older part of Grantown office to be more attractive space.
 - f. Consider installation of solar panels across building to improve greening credentials and reduce bills.
- ii. Our IT infrastructure will support our staff to work comfortably, and efficiently in an ever changing working environment, supporting our aspirations for net zero, and making the best use of the technology available to us. The outcomes of this theme will be:
- a. Exploring between our in-house team and wider arrangements we have, the full range of support needed by the organisation both operationally and for future strategic development.
 - b. Better communication of faults between the wider organisation and the IT team.
 - c. New and existing colleagues are issued with hardware and software appropriate to their roles, with replacement peripherals available as required by staff.
 - d. Strategic approach to GIS is developed.
 - e. Full advantage is taken of the various applications provided by Microsoft 365.
 - f. Client relationship management (CRM) resources are available to staff.
 - g. Up to date standard operating procedures are available to all staff.
 - h. Data sources are systematised and centralised.
- iii. We will have the information and data systems and processes to enable our staff to work efficiently and innovatively. The outcomes of this theme will be:
- a. There will be organisational transparency and publishing as much of our data / records as possible to support open government.
 - b. There will be collaboration with partners on data creation, sharing and management.
 - c. Improved knowledge management / sharing across different teams and functions.
 - d. Consistent project management capability and systems across the organisation.
 - e. Efficient and effective use of all data and information resources held by the Park Authority.



- f. Staff are provided with sufficient guidance and training to use new systems most efficiently and effectively.
 - g. Staff have relevant and near-real time information required for their role at their fingertips.
 - h. Systems and information are used most effectively to reduce inefficient paper-based workflows.
- iv. We will have the right staff in the right roles at the right time, who will be motivated and supported to strive towards excellence, but will also take personal responsibility for their own development, as well as that of colleagues where they have specific expertise / skills that can be shared the outcomes of this theme will be:
- a. More staff and teams will use of the Ballater office in the short term, ensuring more visibility, attraction for a wider pool of applicants and a wider spread of functionality.
 - b. There is a good balance between new staff joining and existing staff remaining, and each learns from the knowledge, behaviours, and experience of the other.
 - c. Planning specific – the team will be well staffed and resilient.
 - d. Housing will not be a barrier to people applying for and being appointed to roles within the Park Authority.
 - e. The Park Authority will test new recruitment selection methods eg for technical or engagement jobs, where job interviews don't give the best indication of whether a candidate would be good at the job.
 - f. We will consider developing an approach to recognising excellent performance.
 - g. More consistency around line-managers managing their staff.
 - h. Induction programme for new staff is dynamic and comprehensive and tailored to be appropriate for the type of role.
 - i. Staff are aware of opportunities for training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and encouraged and supported to make the best of these opportunities, as the organisation embraces a culture of continuous learning and excellence.
- v. We will ensure that our workforce is healthy and resilient, where staff are willing and able to get the best out of each other, and where diversity is welcomed and celebrated the outcomes of this theme will be:
- a. A workforce that is supported by a culture of wellbeing.
 - b. A diverse workforce that is welcoming, understanding, and respectful.



- vi. We will lead our organisation with honesty, inspiration, respect, and integrity, and will have a set of values that reflect the culture of the organisation, and which are dynamic and active. The outcomes of this theme will be:
 - a. There will be a set of values that are applicable and relevant to the organisation, now and for the future development of the organisation.
 - b. A senior management team that is visible and accessible.
 - c. Middle managers (managers at bands D and E) are involved in and help inform operational decisions.

- vii. We will have efficient, innovative, and transparent communications in the organisation, where all staff have opportunities to participate and where we openly celebrate success. The outcomes of this theme will be:
 - a. There will be a strategy for all staff communications that makes best use of the available channels, and which sets out which channel should be used and which all staff are aware of and able to deliver.

Delivering organisational development within the Park

Authority

1. Working groups comprising staff from across the organisation, representing a diversity of teams and job levels, were established for each of the six themes. The working groups were tasked with identifying actions that would support the delivery of the theme – these are the “action plans”. Feedback from the Best Companies Staff Survey discussions has also informed these action plans.
2. Collectively, the six themes, together with the associated action plans form a cohesive, integrated organisational change programme brought together under the umbrella of this ODPS.
3. We recognise that the environment is constantly changing, so flexibility is key, as is the requirement to continuously “check-in” and review the ODPS themes, targets, and activities. As such, the programme will evolve over time, aligned to ongoing and continued conversations about the survey results, and work around values and culture.
4. The Senior Management Team (SMT) will effectively comprise the programme board for delivery of the organisational change programme associated with this ODPS. Operational delivery of the ODPS will be led by a programme team chaired by the



Head of Organisational Development. This programme team will comprise the working group theme leads and will provide summary programme reports upward to SMT and the Board's Resources Committee.

5. The Board's Resources Committee will be consulted on the initial development of the strategy and will be kept informed of the delivery of the organisational change programme over the course of the programme's delivery. The Board will also be consulted on the outcomes of the values and culture work at an appropriate point.
6. Staff will be consulted on this programme, and updates shared with staff via the Staff Consultative Forum.

Recommendation:

Resources Committee are asked to consider and comment on the draft Organisational Development and People Strategy, before it is formally consulted with staff through the Staff Consultative Forum.